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PART I.

IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT ORDERS.

REVENUE SECRETARIAT.

Mines and Explosives Department.

READ—

Report on the working of the Mines and Explosives Department for the year 1923-24, received from the Chief Inspector of Mines with his letter No. 536, dated 30th September 1924.

ORDER NO. I. C. 4110-12—GEOL. 13-24-3, DATED 16TH DECEMBER 1924.

Recorded.

2. Mr. Bocquet was in charge of the Department of Mines and Explosives throughout the year under report. Rules under Section 8 of the Mysore Petroleum Regulation (No. 1 of 1923) were issued by Government during the year and the working of the Regulation was entrusted to the Chief Inspector of Mines and Explosives.

3. During the year under report, there were 39 mining leases and 32 prospecting licenses as against 40 and 48 respectively in the previous year. The number of current mining leases for gold was 22. The number of companies which carried on work was 5. The results of the year's working were satisfactory except in the case of one mine which was not able to declare dividends.

4. The total quantity of bar-gold produced during 1923, and the total value of bullion produced were 422,501·02 ozs. and £1,754, 895-17-8 respectively against 429,559·60 ozs. and £17,89,853-3-0 respectively in 1922, the decrease of 1·95 per cent in value being due partly to the smaller amount of gold produced and partly to a slight decline in value. Four out of five Companies declared dividends, the total amount disbursed being £2,84,644 as against £2,54,620 in 1922. The total royalty payable to Government was £94,860-18-0 as against £95,858-3-4 showing a decrease of 1·04 per cent. The report shows that the balance of royalty outstanding on 1st January 1924, was Rs. 3,21,932. The Chief Inspector is requested to submit a special report to Government upon the subject.

5. The market price of gold during the year averaged Rs. 67-8-0 per fine oz. against Rs. 68 in the previous year. The price has since fallen to Rs. 64 per fine oz. and unless an improvement takes place, the results of the current year's operations will be seriously affected. The fall in the royalty during the year under report would have been much greater but for the increased dividends declared.

6. There was considerable activity during the year in both manganese and chrome mining. The reservation of the latter was relaxed to a certain extent and prospecting licenses, without the right to mining leases, were offered by Government. The Chief Inspector of Mines made an inspection of the important chrome mines that are being worked at present and submitted a detailed report to Government.

7. There were 22,435 persons employed in the mining industry as against 24,964 in the previous year, the decrease being due to general retrenchments on the Kolar Gold Field. 20,604 persons were engaged in Gold Mining as against 23,297 in 1922. The relations between the employers and the employees on the Kolar Gold Field continued to be satisfactory. Steps have been taken to minimise trivial accidents and to improve ventilation and sanitation and to prevent and control fires under-ground, on the lines indicated last year.

8. There were 2,092 accidents during the year as against 181 during the previous year. Of these, 55 were fatal, 149 were serious and 5 were non-mining accidents. The fatal and serious accidents amounted to 9·09 per 1,000 persons employed as against 7·01 in the previous year. The percentage of accidents due to negligence and recklessness is also higher than in the previous year. Government consider that every effort should be made to reduce the number of accidents, by strict enforcement of rules and prevention of offences

In the 55 fatal accidents, 78 persons were killed or died from the injuries received which gives a mortality of 3·48 per 1,000 persons employed as against 2·88 per 1,000 in 1922, and the death rate in the Gold Mines was 3·78 per 1,000 against 3·09 in the previous year, the increase in both cases being attributed mainly to the reduction of the number of persons employed and the increase in the number of fatalities. The fatalities due to rockbursts continue to be heavy, being 40 per cent of the total number. Of the 9 individual accidents involving two or more fatalities, three occurred at the Mysore Mine, three at Champion Reef and three at Nandydroog. In the 15 separate rockburst accidents, 31 persons were killed as compared with 11 and 36 respectively in the preceding year.

Nine fatal accidents due to explosives occurred underground involving the death of 15 persons, against five and seven respectively in the year previous, and seventeen persons were killed by falling down shafts, stopes and winzes in 16 accidents. Government desire that every effort should be made to prevent all avoidable kinds of accidents by a strict enforcement of all the rules relating to the working of the Mines.

9. Government are glad to hear that the scheme inaugurated in 1915, regarding payment of compensation for injuries due to accidents is working satisfactorily and has afforded relief to the people concerned. The total premia collected by the companies was Rs. 50,337-15-6 and the amount of compensation paid was Rs. 1,62,363-12-0, the excess of disbursements over the income being Rs. 1,12,025-12-6.

10. There has been a reduction in the number of cases of thefts, etc., of mining materials, from 99 in 1922 to 72 in 1923. The reason for this decrease has not been given but if it is due to a decrease of crime, it is certainly a source of gratification. During the year, three persons were prosecuted for breaches of the Mines Regulation and Rules, resulting in accidents, and one was convicted and the other two absconded. Twenty-two persons were punished departmentally for less serious offences committed in connection with 12 accidents and 15 persons similarly dealt with in all cases for offences not resulting in accidents.

11. The number of licenses granted under the Explosives Regulation was 451 as against 434 in the previous year and 147 premises or 33·11% of the total number of licensed premises (444) were inspected by the District Officers. With regard to the licenses issued by District Magistrates, the Chief Inspector of Mines reports that in spite of repeated instructions from the Department, instances of licenses for larger quantities of explosives than are allowed by the Rules and the charging of either excess or insufficient fees are numerous. He has also pointed out that the work of inspection of licensed premises carried out by the Magistracy and the Police is very unsatisfactory, the number of inspections having gone down to 374 in 1923, from 463 in 1922, though the number of premises licensed increased. The attention of the District Magistrates is again invited to the remarks of the Chief Inspector of Mines and Explosives as also to the instructions issued in para 10 of Government Order No. J. C. 4011—Geol. 12-23-5, dated 31st December 1923, reviewing the administration report of the Mines Department of 1922-23, and they are requested to see that the omissions and irregularities of the kind brought to notice are put an end to. The Chief Inspector of Mines is also requested to submit a separate report to Government in regard to the Districts in which the number of premises inspected has been very low, with a view to suitable action being taken in respect of officers who have been found negligent in this matter.

K. V. ANANTARAMAN,
Secretary to Government,
Revenue Department.